

Testimony of
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Before the
Education Committee

March 15, 2023

Good afternoon, Senator McCrory, Representative Currey, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty, and members of the Education Committee.

I testify today in support of House Bill 6884. This bill takes important steps toward addressing the educator shortage in Connecticut, showing educators that theirs is a respected profession, and ensuring that our classrooms and schools can provide the best possible education for our students.

I have been a special education teacher in the state of Connecticut since 2004. I am also have been the chair of the negotiations team in my district for 2 cycles. I could speak about the need to have a standard base salary. I could also speak to the unbelievably positive impact providing the COVID benefit enhancement would have in rebuilding an environment of respect between teachers and the community. I could speak to the MUCH needed protected planning time. But out of all of these elements that would foster a better education system in Connecticut.

What I would like to speak to is kindergarten.

This is not a grade I have taught. Not is it one I plan on teaching in the near future, but why happens in kindergarten has a profound effect on my students in middle school. I strongly feel that we are doing a huge disservice to our smallest children by exposing them to such high academic standards at such a young age. Many, many states around CT and most places in the south have an earlier cut off, so there are not 4 year olds spending 45% of the school year working in ridged academic tasks. The disadvantages of being youngest in class don't end in elementary school. I have had 10 year olds really struggling with the transition to middle school and 13 year olds falter through all of first semester freshman year. We need to adjust our kindergarten start date.

But even more important is that we are not teaching them the soft skills that are so so so important in life. Yes kids have to know how to read, but a kid could read light years above grade level and not be able to apply this skill because they can't regulate their emotions. They need to learn to play. They need to play to learn rules matter, they need to play in order to learn turn taking, they need to play in order to learn to work together. Let our children play. The soft skills that are learned in play become the skills that make for successful middle schoolers.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

